



Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk (860)441-6640
Town Manager
(860)441-6630

Meeting Minutes

Representative Town Meeting

Moderator Natalie B. Billing, Representatives Joe Baril, Tom Barnhart, Lori Bartinik, Alicia Bauer, Genevieve Cerf, Michael Collins, Syma Ebbin, June Evered, Peter Fairbank, Robert Garcia, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Keith Hedrick, Debra Jenkins, James Loughlin, Carole McCarthy, Kevin McMahon, Richard Metayer, David Miner, Deborah Monteiro, Betsy Moukawsher, James Moulding, Scott Newsome, Nora Patterson, Deborah Peruzzotti, Robert Post, Kevin Power, Don Pratt, Mary-Ellen Schefers, Eleanor Scussel, Jack Sebastian, Jennifer Smuts, Eleanor Steere, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Patti Thunberg, Cheryl Tilney, Kevin Trejo, and Tom Vivirito.

Wednesday, September 12, 2007

7:30 PM

Senior Center

Regular Meeting

A. ROLL CALL

Moderator Natalie Billing called the meeting to order at 7:35p.m.

27 members were present, and a quorum was declared.

The Moderator reported that Reps. Baril, Bartinik, Cerf, Monteiro, Peruzzotti, and Svencer called to say they are unable to attend this meeting.

Members Present: Moderator Billing, Rep. Collins, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Evered, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Miner, Rep. Moulding, Rep. Moukawsher, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Scussel, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steere, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Thunberg, Rep. Tilney, Rep. Trejo and Rep. Vivirito
Members Absent: Rep. Baril, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Jenkins, Rep. McMahon, Rep. Metayer, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Post, Rep. Schefers and Rep. Svencer

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Mayor Harry Watson, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The members observed a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag led by Rep. McCarthy.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 8, 2007

A motion that the minutes be adopted was made by Rep. Trejo, and seconded by Rep. Smuts. Rep. Power requested an addition to include his reservations about the Senior Center Aqua Therapy Center since it is designated for use by seniors only and that he feels it should be available to any resident.

The vote on the minutes as amended carried 26 in favor 1 abstention (Abstaining: Rep. Trejo).

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Moderator made an announcement on behalf of Rep. Cerf that opening ceremonies for a new downtown Mystic store "Black Dog" is on Friday, September 14, 2007.

Moderator Billing mentioned that she met with the Charter Revision Commission (CRC) and discussed the role of the RTM in Town government. She distributed a memo with several questions and invited members to provide their responses and any other thoughts to the CRC.

Referring to the Moderator's memo, Rep. Steinfeld noted that the "power of initiative" has been used at least twice.

In response to Rep. Ebbin, the Moderator explained that the CRC is researching the idea of a Board of Finance.

The Town Clerk mentioned that the CRC did vote to retain the RTM at their last meeting. The vote was six in favor, one opposed, one abstention, one absent.

The Moderator reminded members to RSVP to the Clerk's office if they are planning to attend Citizenship Day on Monday, September 17, 2007.

Moderator Billing commented that she is obtaining information from the School Superintendent's office regarding year end account fund transfers and what reductions are being contemplated by the Board of Education based on this year's approved budget. She stated that she will share this information when it is obtained.

The Moderator reported that she received a copy of recently approved laws affecting municipalities from State Rep. Elissa Wright.

2007-0218 Additional Appropriation for Catherine Kolnaski School

This matter was Referred to the RTM Public Works Committee, due back on October 10, 2007. The motion carried.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER:

1. Financial report

Mr. Vincent reported that the Unreserved & Undesignated Fund balance as of July 1, 2007 is approximately \$9.6 million; the General Contingency balance is \$350,000 and no funds have been transferred; the Capital Reserve balance is \$1,573,798 as of August 31, 2007. (This includes the preliminary unaudited 2007 balance and is the net of 2008 capital project appropriations).

Mr. Vincent mentioned that the Council has approved the use of \$500,000 from this fund for use on the Kolnaski School project. Use of these funds is being referred tonight to the RTM.

Mr. Vincent noted that a new raised bed planter has been installed at the eastern end of the Veterans Memorial Plaza. Planting should be completed by late September.

2. Monthly briefing

The Town Manager noted that the Groton Public Library is celebrating its 30th Anniversary on Friday, September 14, 2007.

He recognized that Eileen Cicchese from Park & Recreation has received the 2007 Excellence in Inclusion Award from the National Recreation and Parks Association. This is the nation's top award for a professional who successfully includes people with disabilities into parks and recreation programs and services.

The Town Manager explained the reasons for the additional appropriation for the construction of the Catherine Kolnaski Elementary School. He noted that four items were over budget: the high impact windows, reconfiguration of four offices into a classroom, a fire pump, and computer technology. He reported that money has already been allocated for the construction items to keep the project on schedule.

In response to Rep. Ebbin, Mr. Oefinger explained that discussions are ongoing regarding the possibility of litigation for the reimbursement of the additional cost of special windows for Catherine Kolnaski and Fitch High Schools.

In response to several questions by Rep. Trejo, the Town Manager reported that the calculations for the design did not meet the standards required for sufficient water pressure when the test was performed, thus mandating the installation of a fire pump. Mr. Oefinger stated that leasing computer technology is not reimbursable from the State. He mentioned that he will consult with Mr. Greenleaf and provide more information next month about leasing. He noted that considering the rapid advances in technology, financing it for 20 years may not be a good idea.

The Moderator welcomed the following representatives who were recently elected to fill vacancies: Reps. Keith Hedrick from District 3, Jim Loughlin from District 7 and Betsy Moukawsher from District 6.

G. LIAISON REPORTS

1. Town Council - Rep. Monteiro

No report.

2. Economic Development Commission - Rep. Cerf

No report.

3. Town Council/Board of Education/RTM Liaison Committee - Rep. Patterson

No report.

4. Permanent School Building Committee - Rep. Miner

No report.

5. School Design Committee Phase II - Reps. Smuts & Harrell

Rep. Smuts reported on the meetings held August 9 and August 22, 2007. Items discussed were the Master Planning Study and middle school alternatives. She reported that the Board of Education (BOE) has voted not to change the Vision Committee recommendation for two middle schools that would each accommodate 600-800 students. The committee toured the two new elementary school construction sites on September 8 and will tour Fitch Middle School on September 13. The committee has requested staff to provide information about possible land options for middle school alternatives.

6. Shellfish Task Force - Rep. Ebbin

No report.

7. Flanders Road Utility Extension Committee - Reps. Bauer

No report.

H. COMMITTEE REPORTS**1. FINANCE****a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Granatosky**

No meeting, no report.

2. COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Vivirito**

No meeting, no report.

3. EDUCATION**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Patterson**

No meeting, no report.

4. HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Wheeler**

No meeting, no report.

5. RECREATION**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town- Chairman Power**

No meeting, no report.

6. PUBLIC SAFETY**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Pratt**

No meeting, no report.

7. PUBLIC WORKS**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Collins**

No meeting, no report.

8. RULES & PROCEDURES**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town**

No meeting, no report.

I. OTHER BUSINESS

*The Moderator noted that all members received a copy of a draft letter to the Town of Stonington addressing concerns about the continued underfunding of their share of the Mystic & Noank Library annual budget request. She stated that Rep. Power had suggested a letter during the budget sessions and many other members concurred.
(A copy of the letter is attached).*

SUSPENSION OF THE RULES

A motion to suspend the rules to discuss the letter was made by Rep. Miner, seconded by Rep. Fairbank.

The motion carried 26 in favor, 1 opposed (Opposed: Rep. Sebastian).

2007-0203**Letter to Town of Stonington re: Funding for Mystic & Noank Library****LETTER TO TOWN OF STONINGTON RE: FUNDING FOR MYSTIC & NOANK LIBRARY**

A motion was made by Rep. Power, seconded by Rep. Fairbank, to send a letter to the Town of Stonington regarding its under-funding of the Mystic & Noank Library budget request.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 26 - Moderator Billing, Rep. Collins, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Evered, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Miner, Rep. Moulding, Rep. Moukawsher, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Scussel, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steere, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Thunberg, Rep. Tilney, Rep. Trejo and Rep. Vivirito
Opposed: 1 - Rep. Sebastian

The following discussion preceded the vote on this matter.

In response to Rep. Sebastian, the Moderator commented that during budget deliberations and discussion many members felt that it is was necessary that the Town of Stonington contribute their fair share as requested by the Mystic & Noank Library. She explained that for a number of years, the Town of Stonington has not fully funded the request from the library and that more endowment funds are being used each year. She stated that Rep. Power suggested that a letter be drafted addressing these concerns.

Rep. Smuts reiterated the same, and added that the library is using more endowment funds each year to sustain itself. She feels that Groton will eventually have to pay more to support the library in order to avoid losing it due to the depletion of the endowment fund.

Rep. Power stated that he feels it is important and symbolic to take this action to assure that each town contributes its fair share for this library.

The Town Manager requested an indication of how many members would be interested in a school construction tour in the near future. Many members indicated that they would like a tour.

The Moderator volunteered to follow-up with the members to coordinate several dates that could be arranged for tours.

In response to Rep. Loughlin's inquiry, the Manager stated that he is unaware of any service provided to the Town of Groton by Stonington, and that a similar situation of unfair cost sharing exists concerning the pump-out boat in Mystic.

J. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:24p.m. was made by Rep. Garcia, seconded by Rep. Miner and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk